C7I The sources of law are at present custom and the European legal system brought in from outside. Each obviously affects the other: custom is modified by the written code, while the application of the latter is beat by the influence of custom. Law is continually evolving. It is quite difficult to understand, even though often written. The decisions of courts, the minutes of reconciliation proceedings, the "covenants between natives" established by the 1920 decree, the minutes of discussion sessions (1), and even some private contracts are

1. Bulletin de la Société d'Études camerounaises, 1947, No. 19-20, p. 141, (no. 126).

filed in the administrative archives, but they have only rarely been systematically collated.

C7I The general term for custom is biyem (from yem • to know), connoting at the same time habits and modes of life and the laws that regulate them and qualify them as good or bad. Forms of behavior are rather melbo, from bo, to do. Methods and general practices are mam (sing. jam) or mɛ̀ɛ̀ (ajɛ̀ɛ̀ • speech, from ɛ̀ɛ̀ • to say), the second also meaning "business" in a litigious sense. One often hears, almost always with a tone of regret: Nɔ̀ɔ̀m ɛ́yem, bimvam bi nga wɔ̀ɔ̀ bo melbo mete, melu mvun; nale a nga'ane kik, "The old ways, as our ancestors used to do things, they don't exist any longer." The whole "Pahouin regrouping" movement is characterized by this antithesis between regret for the biyem bimvam and yearning for progress. The result has been the growth of pseudo traditions attempting to connect contemporary ways with customary norms.

C7I FR Since 1944 we have witnessed a trend in public opinion in favor of written codification of the law. Most clan groups /70/ have drafted their customary laws, which are revised periodically at the bisulan and which serve as legal basis for the decisions of the civil courts. It is probably too early for a final codification on a territorial scale, which would most likely involve an interethnic unification of the law (already stimulated by the colonial legal system), but periodic publication of local customary law by a committee of high-ranking men and assessors is often demanded and has already been sporadically carried out, as much by ésulan chairman as by certain government officials